PERIODICO EN ESPAÑOL ADENTRO

CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM ★ LUCHE POR EL COMUNISMO ★ PLP

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Volume 52 No. 21 October 21, 2020 suggested donation $1

PARENTS & TEACHERS SOUND THE ALARM ON RACIST METAL DETECTORS



BROOKLYN, October 1—"You are Scholars, Not Suspects!" That is the message the mainly Black and Latin students received as they entered their school building for the first day of school from a multiracial group of 40 parents and teachers. We met dozens of students as they lined up to walk through metal detectors on their first day back in a school building after more than six months. Racist metal detectors are the welcome back that thousands of mainly Black and Latin students have been given by the racist NYC Department of Education (DoE), and City bosses who refuse to make any real antiracist changes even as they spew their empty promises of "equity." As one chant said, "**How do you spell RACIST? D-O-E!"**

Members of a Brooklyn high school Parent Teacher Association (PTA) organized and rallied on the first day of the school buildings' reopening, demanding the racist metal detectors be removed citywide (see box). This multiracial group has a long history of antiracist fightback against the many racist attacks hurled at students.

These past fightbacks include:

- demanding the removal of scanners for years
- demanding more and integrated sports teams
- defending students arrested inside the school for failing to remove a pin holding eyeglasses together
- protesting the disrepair of the school building itself to organizing to defend an anti-communist attack on members of the school.

In the wake of mass antiracist rage

When we can organize antiracist and antisexist actions we can build the confidence within our own class. Our PTA was touched by the explosion of mass anger coming out of the racist murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the start of the summer. Time and again parents responded to our calls to join demonstrations and fight for communist ideas. Our multiracial and intergenerational leadership changed the tenor of several huge marches.

In the run-up to Thursday's picket line against racist metal detectors parents active with us over the summer, and who had seen liberal racism in action over a period of many years before that, rejected the notion that we ought to rely on misleader elected officials like Councilmember Brad Lander or NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams to help lead our event.

Who gets policed?

According to WNYC's "Metal Detectors in New York City High Schools"

These are the percentages of high school students going through metal detectors every morning varying by demographics.

- Black: 48 percent
- Latin: 38 percent
- English Languages Learners: 43 percent
- White: 14 percent
- Asian: 14 percent
- Brooklyn: 42 percent
- Staten Island: 0 percent

Continued on page 4

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

★**EDITORIAL** *Reject Big & Small Fascists, Rebel against dictatorship in disarray...p2*

★**CUNY** *Shut this racist system down...p3*

★ **COLOMBIA** *Capitalist crisis deepens...p4*

★ **GOOD RIDDANCE** *Ginsburg's racist record and individualism exposes her big fascist backers ..P8*

@PLPCHALLENGE

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

OUR FIGHT

✰Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

✰The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

✰Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

✰While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

✰Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

✰Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

✰Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

✰Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✰Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

✰Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

CONTACT US

Email
desafio.challenge@gmail.com
Mail
Box 808 GPO, Brooklyn, NY 11202
Internet
www.plp.org
Twitter, Facebook, Instagram:
@PLPchallenge

WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

CHALLENGE/DESAFIO (ISSN 0009-1049) published bi-weekly by Challenge Periodicals. 1 issue $1. One Year: $20. Six months: $15. Send address changes to CHALLENGE Periodicals, GPO Box 808 Brooklyn, NY 11202, October 21, 2020•Volume 52 No. 21

Editorial

Reject Big & Small Fascists, Rebel against dictatorship in disarray

The U.S. ruling class is in chaos. As the presidential election campaign kicks into final gear, the splits among the capitalists are getting sharper by the day. The debate between Klan hero Donald Trump and mass incarcerator Joe Biden degenerated into an incoherent shouting match between two lifelong racist liars. After Trump and more than a dozen of his closest advisors tested positive for Covid-19, the Superspreader in Chief was left to shamble around a mostly deserted White House, jacked up on steroids and contradicting himself from one minute to the next. In the face of full-blown fascist China's disciplined, sword-rattling challenge to U.S. dominance, the rupture between the Big Fascists (led by multinational finance capital like JPMorgan Chase and Goldman Sachs) and the Small Fascists (organized around domestic energy firms and short-term profits) has reached a breaking point.

Elections are a critical tool for resolving the capitalists' internal conflicts. The Big Fascists need masses of workers to vote for their side to legitimize their plans for inter-imperialist war and fascism. Equally important, they need the myth of electoral democracy and the "peaceful transition of power" to mask their brutal capitalist dictatorship (see page 5). This time around, however, it's unclear whether either gang of bosses will accept the results of the November ballot. The stakes are high. The future of the U.S. profit system and its teetering liberal world order hangs in the balance.

Progressive Labor Party (PLP) calls on all workers to see that their power lies not in the voting booth but in class struggle in the streets and workplaces. Among capitalists there is no "lesser evil," only a choice between blood-sucking mass murderers. Democrats and Republicans alike stand for racism, sexism, exploitation, state terror, and the death of millions from lack of food, shelter, medical care, and public health infrastructure. Only by organizing anti-racist fightback and building for communist revolution will we turn the tide against rising fascism and impending global war.

Rise of Small Fascists throws U.S. bosses into disarray

The Small Fascists' agenda is to cut taxes for the wealthy, remove the U.S. military from costly overseas commitments, withdraw from international alliances, eliminate social services for the working class, and scrap environmental regulations. After years of organizing on the margins, with fringe third parties like the Libertarians, they found their chance to move inside the tent with the rise of the gutter racist Tea Party. But they were unable to challenge the Big Fascists' stranglehold on state power until Trump. The failed developer and reality TV con man hijacked the Republican Party with a base of alienated white workers, hard-right vigilante racists, and hypocritical evangelicals. Finance capital placed its bet on the despicable Hillary ("Super-Predator") Clinton and is still paying for its arrogance.

We know through dialectics that the internal is primary. The Big Fascists' lack of discipline—their corruption, individualism, and short-term outlook—enabled the Small Fascists to grab power. The loss of decent-paying industrial jobs and two failed Middle East wars cracked open the door. The Great Recession of 2008 and Barack Obama's bank bailout opened it wider. Small Fascists like the Kochs didn't much like Trump and his anti-immigrant rants, since much of their profits come from immigrant labor. But in an act of mutual opportunism, they came together to seize the executive branch.

Trump's wildly disruptive presidency reflects a qualitative change in the capitalist bosses' internal struggle. To many CHALLENGE readers, Trump and his openly racist and sexist backers are repellent, the very essence of capitalist callousness, selfishness, and greed. They aren't wrong. But for our class, the alternative can't be Joe Biden and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez. Because it's the Big Fascists who have an even more dangerous long-term outlook for the international working class.

Big Fascists in jeopardy

For over a century, and especially since World War II, U.S. finance capital has controlled the military, the intelligence agencies, all three branches of government, and virtually all of the big media. Along with rulers in



Western Europe, they established alliances to maintain U.S. supremacy and contain their enemies, like the old Soviet Union and current-day China and Russia. Not so long ago, the bosses could work out their differences before the knives came out. In 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court stopped the Florida recount and named George W. Bush president. A united ruling class rallied behind the fascist Patriot Act and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. It formulated the Hart-Rudman plan, a blueprint to sustain its domination through the 21st century. The contradiction between the bosses' two wings, so glaring today, was still young.

But external pressures have sharpened the contradiction. China's rise—its Belt and Road Initiative, its global leadership in the pandemic—gives the U.S. bosses less room to patiently work out their disagreements. This reality is driving finance capital to fascism that much faster—first to destroy the Small Fascists, then to build a multicultural, patriotic movement to control the working class and prepare for World War III.

U.S. allies are plainly worried. After the first (and maybe last) Trump-Biden debate, labeled "a shit show" by CNN, a French political analyst said, "European leaders must have woken up this morning thinking, 'The American leadership is over, and for a while, even if Biden is elected and tries to rebuild what Trump has destroyed.'" The U.S. bosses' rivals also took notice. According to a state-controlled newspaper in China, "Such a chaos at the top of U.S. politics reflects division, anxiety of U.S. society and the accelerating loss of advantages of the U.S. political system" (NYT, 9/30).

Although Trump proclaims himself the "law and order" president, the Big Fascists have a much longer and uglier history of promoting state terror against the working class. Biden, who built a career on serving the profit-hungry banks and credit card companies, is the embodiment of finance capital's decay. From his 1994 mass incarceration crime bill, to the bloody Middle East wars executed by the Bushes and Obama, to his latest refusal to "defund" his beloved police, Biden has been the most loyal of stooges for the Big Fascists' lethal program. His running mate and former prosecutor Kamala Harris, proudly known as California's "top cop," played a significant role in unleashing the Klan in blue to kill Black workers like Oscar Grant (NYT, 8/9).

Don't vote, revolt!

Fighting for communism means building a mass revolutionary party and a world run by and for the international working class. We can't get there with the bosses' sham of democracy, with elections that force us to pick one racist exploiter over another. And we can't get there without smashing the racist, sexist, and nationalist divisions that keep our class in shackles.

Over the seven months of the worldwide capitalist pandemic, in their fightback on the streets and their courageous labor in hospitals and grocery stores, workers have shown that our class can take the lead in caring for one another and overcoming the most challenging obstacles. These communist impulses within the working class are what keep the bosses up at night. The next step is to sharpen our struggle with comrades and friends to create that better world. Fight for communism! Join Progressive Labor Party! ✪

CUNY crisis

Shut this racist system down!



South Bronx, October 9–The crisis at the City University of New York (CUNY) is sharpening, as the capitalist trustees and politicians pursue their plans of implementing budget cuts, packing virtual classes with as many as a hundred students and laying off thousands of part-time instructors and college workers. CUNY administrators have increased class sizes, launching a racist attack on students' education. This is a racist attack because the students at CUNY are disproportionately Black and Latin. But racism divides and hurts all working class students. So several student clubs and some union members from two Bronx CUNY campuses took to the streets and held a militant, multiracial march against racist cutbacks.

We began with a short rally near the courthouse, where students and faculty had an informal "warm up" of speeches. (see letters on page 6). We spoke about the need to fight back against these racist cuts, about why we need to strike, and about the need for unity between workers and students. Many faculty & staff have lost their health insurance in the midst of the pandemic that has disproportionately stricken Black and Latin workers and students. Colleges throughout CUNY are pressuring staff to risk their lives at unsafe campuses. Our speakers included students from both campuses, who called on us to continue the fight back. They pointed out how the problem is capitalism. Politicians are part of this capitalist system. An adjunct made the point that voting for the Democrats will not resolve this crisis. In New York City Democrats run everything. They are the problem. The adjunct said, "We are the ones we are waiting for." That's right and the future for us as workers is communism where we run all of society.

Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members are active in our union committees and student clubs. We were happy to be joined by comrades from the Bronx and to see so many workers responding to CHALLENGE newspaper. In these mass groups that we work in, we are trying to bring workers and students closer to our communist ideas through discussion, struggle, and action. Our study group has discussions about how racism and capitalism go hand in hand, and why capitalism cannot provide us with the education we need. We look forward to more of our co-workers and students joining PLP as we battle on!

The march ended in front of one of the Bronx campuses, where a number of security guards began approaching us and calling for backup until they realized we were "livestreaming" the march and backed off. It was a clear message to the marchers that we must demand COPS ARE REMOVED FROM CAMPUS as well as the end to austerity. The closing speech was very inspiring as a professor who was laid off explained what it had been like for her to lose her livelihood. She thanked everyone for coming. "I love you all for standing by me" she said and then proceeded to call for us to continue building a movement to shut down CUNY and fight back against capitalism. We ended with a bang and formed a "human chain" extending from one end of the block to the other. With our signs and a huge banner facing traffic we called on drivers to honk in support.

One of the student leaders shared her reflections after the march. "It was amazing to come out to the march and get the message out about striking for a fully funded CUNY. Our voices were loud and clear, which encouraged passersby to join us and strangers to proudly honk their horns in support. I hope to attend more marches and be part of this collective fight."

This march was powerful. It represented the class anger we feel at what is happening to our students and colleagues. It was a collective effort with different people volunteering to plan the route, translate the leaflet, post the fliers on the Internet, etc. It is a glimpse of how powerful the working class can be. Join us in the fight against racism and for communism!✪

Colombia: capitalist crisis deepens, workers rebel vs. police

COLOMBIA, Sept 24—After two cops murdered Javier Ordoñez, thousands took to the streets, leading to clashes with the state-sponsored thugs. As crisis in Colombia deepens, the working class needs to reject working within the system and embrace building outside the system: communism.

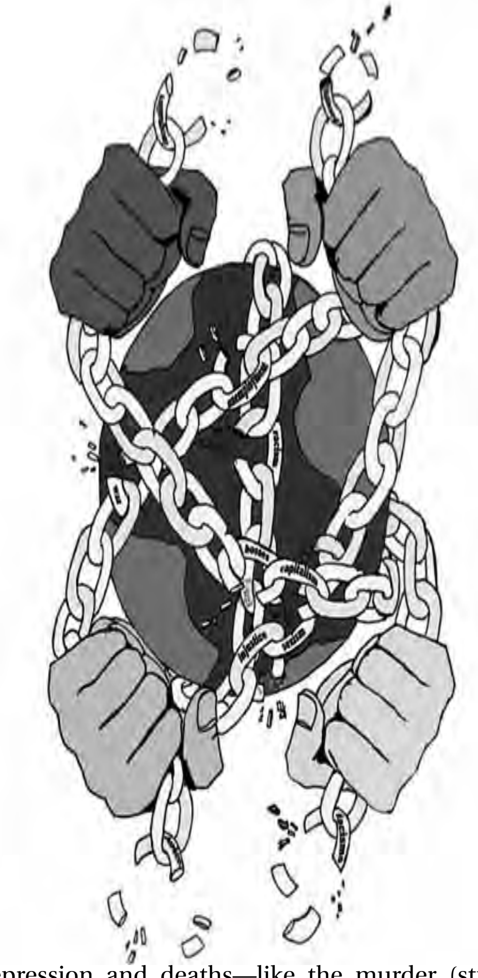
These demonstrations demand a restructuring of the police, the resignation of the Minister of Defense, Carlos Holmes Trujillo, and the end of political assassinations of social leaders. Demands also include a solution to unemployment, and the annulment of Decree 1174, which is the "most aggressive labor and pension reform in the last 30 years."

What the spontaneous movement needs is communist leadership to raise the consciousness of workers. Through struggle, our class needs to see how the police are a murderous institution that cannot be reformed. We must understand that it only protects and serves the interests of the ruling class. Only communist revolution can put an end to the present waves of state terrorism against our class and build a new society free from all forms of racist, nationalist, sexist oppression, bosses wars and wage slavery.

Crisis intensifies

This year, we have seen the horrible return of massacres, the racist displacement of communities in fields and cities, the constant threat from paramilitaries, and the increasing murder of social leaders. On top of that, working-class fighters, former FARC guerrillas, peasant, indigenous and Black organizations have experienced this extermination with greater force during the quarantine. Much of this repression is carried out by the military and groups of thugs at the service of the state and local capitalists.

Health, government, and recycling workers and strike committees continue to carry out cacerolazos (demonstrations with the banging of pots and pans) and demonstrations in squares, parks, and public spaces. The protesters call for the dismantling of ESMAD (Colombian anti-riot police), responsible for repression and deaths—like the murder (still unpunished) of Dylan Cruz on November 21, the day of the first national strike. The mass demonstrations are called by community organizations, women's student organizations and other organizations belonging to the National Unemployment Committee.



The police repression during the demonstrations left at least 14 murdered, more than 250 wounded, and at least 150 shot. The number of live bullet injuries reached 74. Several reports of abuse and rape by the police during the illegal arrests were also recorded. According to the magazine "Noche y Niebla" (Night and Fog), the biggest "human rights" violators in Colombia in 2019 were the paramilitaries and the police. By human rights, they mean violence against the working class.

The repression also had a vigilante character: "sexual abuse, against two detained women, obstruction of information, and even arrests in clandestine centers as evidenced in videos where, in addition, it is proven how the police exchange weapons with thugs in plain clothes, who shoot as a team, and also aim directly at the body of the protesters and beat them while they were defenseless."

Workers organize against police attacks

Residents of many neighborhoods in the capital and other cities organized to prevent the police from entering their residential complexes, beating, and shooting at people. There are many reports of police infiltration and of having seen plainclothes agents behind the fires of shops and looting. In many videos, the police are seen fleeing attacks from organized neighbors with stones and sticks.

During the protests, more than 30 CAI (Rapid Response Police Centers) were burned or destroyed. Neighbors denounce that these are the "booths" where drugs are traded, and bribes are paid for mafia activities. After the fires, many of these CAIs were transformed into popular libraries and community meeting centers by protesters.

PLP is building a base within the working class as part of our international work. Members of the Party, friends, and readers of our newspaper CHALLENGE are participating in these demonstrations and joining our sisters and brothers who fight for a better society. We discuss and continue to be involved in the class struggle as a way to move forward to communism. ✪

Parents & teachers sound the alarm on racist metal detectors

Continued from page 1

Thursday's demonstration also came in the wake of a series of club meetings, crowdcasts and zoom calls where Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members moved friends, student families, and coworkers into a discussion where the need for organizing against the racist attacks on students in the lose-lose scenario of remote vs. live instruction was hammered home.

These locally and nationally organized virtual meetings, along with responsibly distanced socializing, gave us a firm foundation to call for sharp action as the first day of live instruction for students approached.

Metal detectors, tool of terror and division

It is not always clear to students, parents, or school staff why metal detectors in schools are a racist attack. Some believe that they are there to provide safety. This is the lie that is sold to workers by a system that relies on racist divisions and fear mongering to keep the working class divided.

Metal detectors in school means that students are seen and treated as potential criminals. "In 2016, 99 percent of all New York City public school students handcuffed during incidents of emotional distress were Black and Latin. New York City's Black students had the highest rate of suspension, accounting for 27.1 percent of the population but almost half of all suspensions. Statewide, 1 in 5 Black boys and 1 in 7 Black girls are suspended from school" (Alliance for Quality Education, 6/19).

WE WANT YOU

to join the Progressive Labor Party!

This year, during the Covid-19 pandemic, scanning will result in even more harm, clogging entrances to schools where the urgent priorities should be maximizing physical distancing and instruction time. Even if it goes against any common sense or costs the city more money amidst a budget crisis, one thing the bosses' always give priority to is more racism!

Metal detectors in schools also build suspicion among students. They teach students to be fearful of one another. This ideology builds disunity within the working class, weakening our ability to unite as one working class against capitalism, the racist, sexist, exploitative class system. It builds the illusions that we cannot rely on each other for the solutions to the worlds' problems. It builds the cynicism that therefore our only option is to put our hope in one politician or another's empty promises to "fix" the very system they represent.

Building our class muscles through struggle

This small, but significant action reflects the kind of organizing that really can make a change. As we near the elections, it is hard to escape the pressure to view voting as the real way to make a change. Elections under capitalism are a lose-lose for workers because they reflect workers' cynicism that the international working class does not have the potential to run society in our interests and builds the illusion that this system can be reformed in our interests (see editorial, page 2.) The horrible handling of this pandemic from the beginning and the disorganized reopening of schools (some NYC schools are already reclosing following a rise in infection rates) illustrate how the bosses see our working-class children as completely expendable.

Only when the international working class controls all of society in the interests of our class, and not for the profits of a few, will we be able to truly build an antiracist, antisexist world that ALL of our children can thrive in. We still have a long way to go for the masses to turn these ideas into action and to turn action into a fight for a communist world. This rally was a small but hopeful step in that direction. ✪

Good Riddance!

Ginsburg's racist record and individualism exposes her Big Fascist backers

The naked partisan brawl over their hallowed Supreme Court seat is another reflection of the bosses' inability to govern "in the old way"–of their turn toward fascism. It wasn't so long ago that Ruth Bader Ginsburg and arch-racist "intellectual" Antonin Scalia were besties who went to the opera together. It was like Joe Biden's warm and collaborative relationships with Jim Crow senators James Eastland and Strom Thurmond ("one of my closest friends," Biden once said). Whatever their disagreements, they were on the same team. But given the sharpening contradictions of capitalism, that era is gone.

As the fight among the bosses sharpens, the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg exposes some of the problems the Big Fascist bosses are having within their own ranks with selfishness. Ginsburg as a judge willingly defended the racist anti-working-class policies of the Big Fascist liberal bosses, but when push came to shove, she, like many in the capitalist class, put herself above the class needs of the bosses. When then President Barack Obama took her to lunch and hinted that she should resign so he could appoint her successor, she refused. This type of subjectivity is causing problems for the Big Fascists as they struggle to take down Donald Trump and his Small Fascist backers in preparation for war with China.

The Big Fascists bosses are trying to mobilize around the mythology that the Supreme Court has the power/potential to defend the working class against rogue presidents or a right-wing Congress. The Big Fascist bosses want us to believe that it's essential to elect Biden (and Obama and Hillary Clinton before him) to appoint "progressive" justices and in particular to preserve Roe v. Wade. This big lie that liberal politicians or judges will defend the working class has led to disasters such as Bill Clinton and Biden teaming up to throw millions of Black workers into prison. Where was the Supreme Court then? The Court (like the President and Congress) responds to mass militancy in the streets and mass movements in general. Reforms, however temporary, are driven by class struggle, not a group of nine ruling-class stooges in robes.

For her part Ginsburg was an eager stooge of the bosses racist system. She consistently carried out her job to enshrine and protect racist policies. In her decision in Sherrill v. Oneida, she ruled against indigenous people with "the language in that opinion…considered some of the more overtly racist language in its challenge and skepticism of tribal interests" (Marshall Project, 9/23/20). In United States v. Sineneng-Smith, Ginsburg argued for prosecution of advocates for migrant workers who "encouraged" those workers to enter the country. She supported the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and the Trump administration's policy of speeding deportation of asylum-seekers (Politico, 9/20) This is on top of her rulings in support of prosecutors and searches by police officers (Ohio State Law Journal, Vol. 70:4).



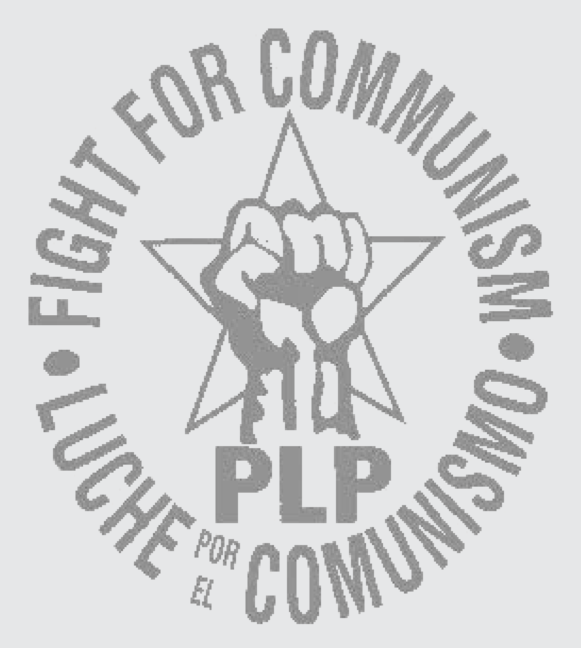
Ginsburg was a "federalist," which is short-hand for the racist "states' rights" movement that goes back to slavery days. Her racism sometimes slipped through her "progressive" façade. Most famously she was particularly tone deaf when she called Colin Kaepernick's protests "stupid and dumb." (She was later forced to apologize for this). She also had the worst record of any current justice in hiring Black law clerks, a coveted pathway to becoming a judge, having only one in her 27 years in the Supreme Court. As devoted as Ginsburg was to defending a racist system, she exemplified the contradictions within the ruling class' politicians, and in this case a judge, who demanded seemingly unlimited fame or money or both in reward for their service. Her individualism and refusal to retire when Obama was President is another example of the lack of discipline within the capitalist class.

Just a quick look at the ages of the leading politicians says a lot about the rulers failure to create space for younger leadership. Trump 74, Biden 77, Mitch McConnell 78, Nancy Pelosi 80. It raises a question as to whether Biden will, should he win, be willing to step down after one term or insist on running again at the age of 81. But it's not just the age issue for the bosses. While the working class has been bearing the brunt of the capitalist crisis in lowered life expectancy, increased poverty and miserable health care, the bosses servants in Washington are demanding and receiving more and more for their loyalty.

As the political class makes demands, the culture of self-servingness dominates. Bill Clinton was caught sleeping with an intern, yet to this day he is defended by his fellow Democrats. Then, after leaving the White House, the Clintons raked in millions through donations from bosses from other countries to their foundation as well as big bucks for speaking on Wall Street. The Obamas have taken in over $60 million in television and book deals since leaving the White House. The Biden and Trump families have gorged themselves at the trough of capitalists from around the globe by selling their connections. In a period where the ruling class is preparing a fascist crackdown to prepare for war, the gross selfishness of their front people is becoming untenable for them.✪

Democracy is a ruling-class dictatorship

One rallying cry for the liberal ruling class is that the November U.S. elections are about saving "American democracy" (See editorial, page 2) As the communist revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin pointed out, there is no such thing as "pure" democracy (see Lenin's Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky). In class society, every so-called democracy is actually a dictatorship by whatever class holds state power. Ancient Greece, often cited as the birthplace of democracy, disenfranchised all women and the people who actually kept their society going—the enslaved workers. In the 18th century, the U.S. "Founding Fathers," many of whom owed their fortunes to large plantations under slavery, had a similar rulebook: "[T]he colonial electorate consisted of only 10 percent to 20 percent of the total population" (crf-usa.org).



Every revolutionary period, whether from slavery to feudalism or feudalism to capitalism, represented a change in the nature of "democracy." In the U.S. today, the democracy among the bosses is also a dictatorship over the working class. As a result, voting cannot address the fundamental contradiction of capitalism: the conflict between those who own the means of production (the bosses) and those who create everything of value (the workers).

Internationally, the working class struggles for basic necessities while the capitalists fight to accumulate more wealth. War and climate change have made millions of workers refugees. Hunger is widespread and growing. As we've seen in recent months, decent health care is restricted to those who can afford it; those without jobs or insurance may be left to die at home.

Only through class struggle can workers exercise our power. But even after we win hard-fought reforms, the bosses will eventually take any gains back. For real democracy, workers must fight for communism and the dictatorship of the working class. Only then will the working class have the final say in how we run our factories, schools, farms, and communities. ✪

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.



Workers defend family in middle of eviction

Capitalism needs racism and war to survive. Increased fascism is in our future. We will fight for communism and build a world where everyone has a home, medical care, enough to eat, education, clean water to drink and more. We will do this by building the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) and learning how to fight together while spreading the ideas of communism.

The pandemic has exposed the rottenness of capitalism all over the world. Black and Latin workers have been dying at far higher rates than white workers from coronavirus. Unemployment and homelessness is worse for Black and Latin workers everywhere. In Chicago there are a reported 86,000 workers who are unhoused, including 60,000 people who live doubled up - 60 percent were Black, 30 percent were white and 27 percent identified as Latin. 81 percent of those unhoused in Chicago were Black (Chicago Coalition for the Homeless). These figures are from 2017; the numbers are no doubt higher for 2020.

One of our main struggles in the Party is to get more involved in mass organizations. I got involved with anti-eviction groups because of this struggle and I am a renter.

While in a zoom meeting, one of the members of Chicago Tenants Movement started live streaming an eviction that was taking place in my neighborhood, so I went. There were close to 30 young people there talking with each other about what was happening. There were three kkkops on the scene with two vehicles, walking through the crowd to their cars. Soon the tenants came outside.

It turns out that the tenants were a family with an infant and a toddler. The tenants were scared, hopeless and sad. As the police walked through the group of protesters I began to shout at them and others joined in! The neighbors could hear us saying "It's not their fault they can't pay rent!! Layoffs are happening!" The police tried to tell us to be quiet and we told them, "We won't be quiet - This isn't a hospital zone!"

The police tried to tell us "It's not your business, you're not in it" to which we loudly said, "We are all in it together! Anyone could lose their job and then get evicted!" Other workers shouted "This is an illegal eviction!" and "How can you evict people during a pandemic?!"

Very soon after we started yelling at the police, they left! The police and "caretaker" had changed the locks on the apartment and put the tenant's possessions in trash can liners in the backyard . The young people changed the locks so the tenants could get in and moved their possessions back. There was a plumbing problem with the toilet being backed up - the police tried to use that as the excuse for eviction! Meanwhile, the landlord is allowed to collect rent money, even when housing conditions are not up to code!

I read that the family got another eviction notice the day after the eviction was stopped. We will go to the next action with CHALLENGE and reach out to more people. The tenants who are facing eviction reached out to a neighbor who is part of the Chicago Tenants Movement. It's ties like this that we are building with our friends, coworkers, families and new friends we meet in anti-racist struggles that will help the Party grow.

★★★★★

'It was amazing'

It was amazing to be a part of an informal and important march. The reception from the community was amazing, being pulled aside and answering questions to the people of the Bronx. When informing them that what CUNY is doing is racist, such a shock comes across their faces because the first thing they think about is those children and people going to college and dealing with this system. I appreciate all those that came to the march and gave their energy to the streets of the Bronx.



A speak-out for Breonna

This past week our comrades in our Bronx college work collaborated with their base to organize and host an emergency virtual speak out around the court hearing against Breonna Taylor's murderers. This tragic slaying of yet another Black worker along with the subsequent defiling of her name and image via alternative narratives produced by the kkkops and proliferated by the bosses media is absolutely nauseating, but events like this building towards working-class consciousness, solidarity and action provide a bright light of hope in this dark night.

Unlike the primary event occurring via the Bronx campuses where administrators pontificated their lousy position on this tragedy, this event was strongly led by students expressing and expanding upon revolutionary ideas. One recurring idea is that if we want justice of any kind, that means we need to get rid of the whole capitalist system. We talked about the importance of educational institutions in that they provide a space of interaction for the working class to digest current events, and the question of what to do further arose frequently as well. It was refreshing that little mention of electoral politics was brought up; after all, why would it help to propagate the very system that functions to kill our working class brothers and sisters with impunity? How can we fix a system that is doing exactly what it was built to do? The majority of us maintained that the answer to that is getting out into the streets, but we in the Progressive Labor Party also know this is not enough. A revolutionary, mass movement can only lead to the liberation of the working class if it is organized by a militant party led by the principles of democratic centralism. It was inspiring to see this group of students expressing our line confidently. As a member of the college section I greatly look forward to working more closely with them in building our party in the continual struggle for justice on behalf of all those callously slain by capitalism.



★★★★★

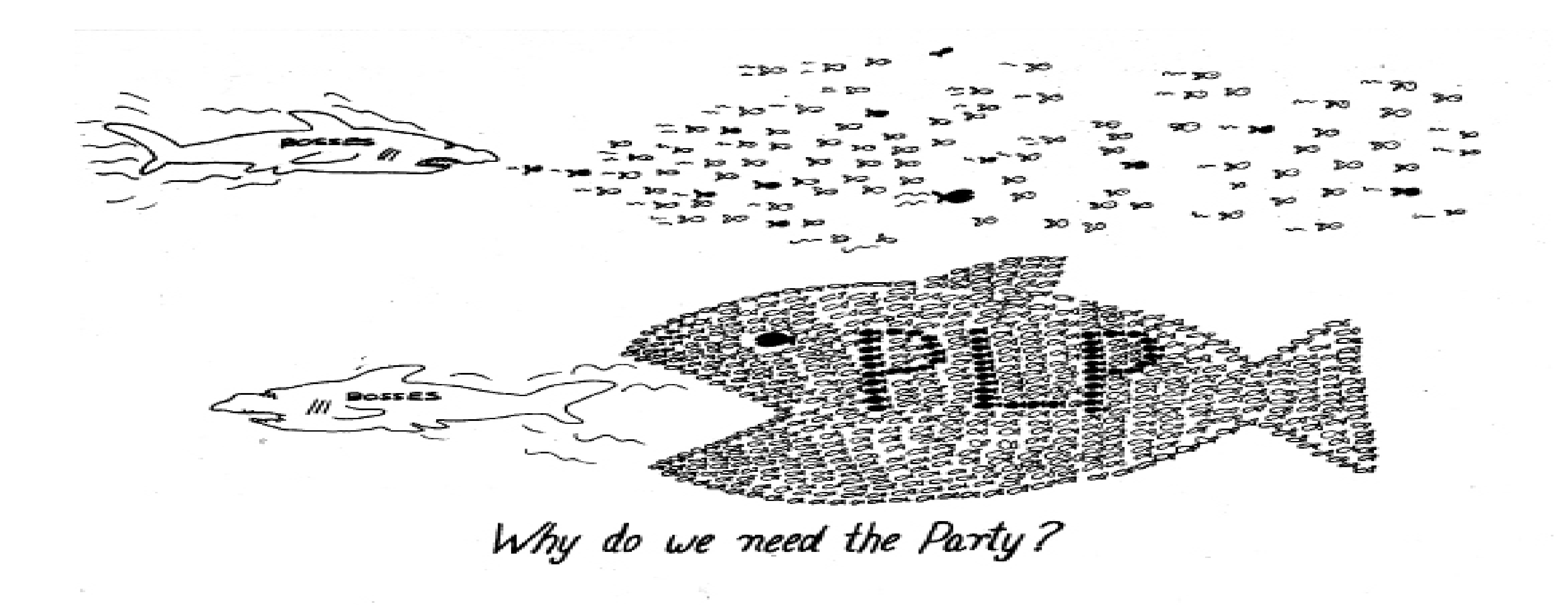
Keeping up the day-to-day struggle

The importance of staying involved in mass movements makes our party stronger and attracts new members and supporters.

That is why some members of our PLP club are constantly involved in the struggles of a community organization. We have participated and given leadership, distributed CHALLENGE in all events to the best of our ability.

We have distributed more than 350 CHALLENGEs and we have always fought for communist politics because the class struggle is fundamental to destroy capitalism and imperialism. With a revolution, we will seize power and build a communist society, in which we will work for the good of all.

★★★★★



Dialectical Materialism

The history of philosophy is written in blood

The basic issue in philosophy is the struggle between materialism and idealism. In philosophy, materialism means that material reality - the stars and planets, the atoms and molecules, heat and light - existed before thought. Idealism is the opposite.

Idealists believe that thought—in the form of God, order, spirit, destiny, fate, karma, or human consciousness—came first. Materialists believe that thought reflects matter. Idealists believe that matter reflects thought. Communists are materialists.

As pushers of idealism, the capitalists are similar to earlier ruling classes. The enslavers of ancient times and the feudal lords of the Middle Ages used religious ideas to keep the enslaved and serfs from rebelling. For example, they said the pharaoh, emperor, or king was God, or at least a direct representative of God on earth, and therefore had to be obeyed. Lesser ruling-class figures were indirect representatives of this divine power.

Serfs were told that life on earth might be hell, but disobedience to these God-chosen rulers was a sin that would lead not only to immediate punishment, but to eternal hell. Passive obedience, on the other hand, would be rewarded after death by an eternal afterlife in heaven.

Idealism can't stop rebellion

Religious forms of idealism still influence many people, because they offer security and care, even if imaginary, to those who suffer from the real insecurity and harshness of capitalism. And they offer rationalizations to those who fear fighting back.

However, in an age before the development of science, when superstition was virtually universal because it appeared to be the only way to explain nature, religious idealism was an even more powerful weapon against the masses. Despite this indoctrination, people fought back, at times even inventing other "Gods" to justify their actions.

During antiquity and the Middle Ages there were thousands of rebellions by slaves and serfs, such as the revolt led by Spartacus in ancient Rome, and the Peasant Wars in Germany during the 16th Century. These revolts were put down by the organized violence of the state, often only after prolonged armed struggle, and often followed by mass executions of the rebels and anyone suspected of supporting them.

The crime? Astronomy. The penalty? Death

Even people not directly involved in class struggle were attacked. The Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno was imprisoned for seven years, before being excommunicated and burned at the stake by the Catholic church.

What crimes required Bruno's execution? He ridiculed the "mysteries and miracles" described in the Bible, claiming they were impossible. He put forward the astronomy developed by Copernicus, who said the earth and the other visible planets revolved around the sun, and that the stars could be other suns, with other planets revolving around them.

Galileo, who also put forward and further developed Copernican astronomy, publicly retracted his views in 1633, under the threat of torture by the Church. But Galileo knew that the Church and the rulers were wrong. As he was led from the court that convicted him, he is rumored to have said: "Well, it [the earth] moves, anyhow."

In the beginning are the facts

To the feudal lords and the Church, what was most frightening about Copernicus, Bruno, and Galileo was their materialist approach. These early scientists all believed in God-they even dedicated their work to God. But they based their conclusions about nature on investigating material reality. Their "final authority" was nature.

But the feudal lords and the Church based their authority on the words in the Bible and in the writings of Aristotle. If Aristotle and, especially, the Bible could be proven wrong about nature by investigating facts, who knew where this could lead? Would they go on to deny the existence of heaven and hell, and of the soul. Then what would keep people from rebelling?

The capitalists also fight against materialism. But where there is likeness there is also difference. The capitalist class had to use some materialist ideas to overthrow the authority of feudalism. For example, they had to oppose ''the divine right of kings."

They also had to take a materialist approach to develop the science necessary for capitalist production. Aristotle and the Bible did not provide guidance for inventing steam engines or dynamite. Because capitalism is competitive, there is constant pressure to take a materialist approach in order to come up with techniques that will revolutionize production and produce more profits. Failure to do so often means defeat by other capitalists.

Capitalists want science AND superstition

Once materialism was stalking the land in the form of physics, chemistry, geology, biology and engineering, what was to prevent the working class from using the same scientific approach to analyze and change human society? Science is a more powerful tool than superstition.

The capitalists panicked. They denied that the scientific method could be applied to history or society. The theories of Marx, Engels, and other advocates of dialectical materialism were attacked in articles and books by bought-and-paid-for professors all over Europe and America.

Marx and Engels were expelled from Germany, France, and Belgium. They lived in exile in England. Many of their comrades were jailed or killed.

In 1871, the working class of Paris dared to put some of the ideas of communism into practice. They established the first dictatorship of the proletariat- the Paris Commune.

The workers of Paris were furious with the Catholic priests for their service to the old regime, the bourgeois dictatorship headed by the "Emperor" Louis Napoleon, nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte. They removed the religious symbols from the churches, which they converted to meeting places for clubs of revolutionary workers. They took education out of the hands of the Church, where it had been placed by the old government, and put it in the hands of the Commune. Materialism, not idealism, was to be the basis of education. Ideas were to be questioned, not taken on faith.

Bosses build a monument to their own fear

The Commune lasted only seven weeks. The revolution had taken place during the Franco-Prussian War. It was destroyed by a temporary alliance between the invading Prussian (German) army and the defeated army of the French bourgeoisie. The German rulers were afraid that revolutionary ideas would spread to Germany! So they rearmed their defeated enemies so that they could crush the revolutionary workers of Paris.

When the French capitalists recaptured Montmartre, one of the centers of communist strength, their troops rounded up and shot up to 50,000 men, women, and children. Their blood flowed down the sewers to the river Seine, which ran pink for days. Then, on the same hill where the Communards had kept their artillery, the Catholic Church built a white stone chapel called "the sepulcher of the expiation of the sins of the Paris Commune." Known as Sacre-Coeur, it still stands today, a monument to the fear and hatred of the bosses toward workers who dared to overthrow the idealist lies of religion and apply science to society.

The battle between idealism and materialism is not an academic affair, but a vital part of the class struggle between workers and bosses for control of the world. ✪

CAPITALISM BREEDS SEXISM RACISM & IMPERIALISM!





The war that settled the original split in the U.S. ruling class



John Brown and a multiracial unit of Black and white workers led a valiant and bloody rebellion against slavery in Harpers Ferry.



Following up with the excellent article in the 9/23 CHALLENGE on John Brown's raid, there are lessons still to be learned from this courageous action. His plan was to seize the weapons there and start arming the enslaved workers who would then lead a large-scale rebellion against slavery. With the recent increased violence in the United States by racist cops and vigilante racists, and (on a much smaller scale) antiracists, it is worth exploring the decade that led to the U.S. Civil War. By the end of the 1850s the use of violence to settle political disputes had become something of a norm.

Like all forms of class society, slavery itself relied on ruling class violence, both organized and spontaneous. Nat Turner's 1831 armed rebellion catapulted the anti-slavery movement into a new phase, where immediate abolition became an increasingly popular program. Abolitionists like Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, John Brown, Sojourner Truth, William Lloyd Garrison and many others, joined this fight. The 1850 Fugitive Slave Act extended the reach of the enslavers into the North to capture accused runaways, but abolitionists often attacked these kidnappers, sometimes freeing the runaways. Frederick Douglass said, "The only way to make the Fugitive Slave Law a dead letter is to make a dozen or more dead kidnappers."

Northern capitalists defeat southern enslavers

At the same time northern finance and industrial capitalists were expanding, even looking at profiteering opportunities all over the world. To the backward, southern slave owning class, King Cotton depended on enslaving Black workers indefinitely even if it meant seceding and forming their own country. Even worse, this southern ruling class had a stranglehold on federal power, controlling the Supreme Court and the presidency into the 1850s. The logic of the infamous Dred Scott Supreme Court case of 1857 gave a green light to expand slavery.

The rising northern capitalists needed a united country and unimpeded command of federal power to build an empire that would eventually encompass the world. Lincoln's promise that slavery would not expand to new territories fit the needs of northern capital. Lincoln's seizure of the White House in 1860 was intolerable to the slaveocracy who then quit the Union. To discipline and control these secessionists, Lincoln waged war to bring them back. Immediate emancipation, the long-time abolitionist goal, but never one of Lincoln's, was a wartime necessity forced on to the ruler's agenda by thousands of brave, enslaved Black workers. In the chaos of war they made countless desperate bids for freedom by running away to Northern lines. With the southern enslavers defeated, the federal government "would end slavery under conditions controlled by whites, and only when required by the political and economic needs of the business elite of the North. It was Abraham Lincoln who combined perfectly the needs of business, the political ambition of the new Republican Party, and the rhetoric of humanitarianism…" (Howard Zinn, The People's History of the United States)

U.S. imperialists face Chinese imperialists and racist domestic isolationists

Today there is again a split within the U.S. ruling class, but the world situation is much different. After almost a century of vicious Jim Crow racism, an industrial revolution built on the sweat and blood of millions of workers, two world wars, Korea, Vietnam and countless other wars, the U.S. imperialists briefly ruled a worldwide empire. They controlled both the Republican and Democratic political parties. But now rising Chinese imperialism, resurgent Russian imperialism and even many regional wannabe imperialists are challenging them as their global power fades. These rulers presided over a breathtaking assault on workers' standard of living since the 1970s that has accelerated with the 2008 crisis and it's billionaire-friendly 'recovery.' And now, there is a domestically oriented group of capitalists that have taken over the Republican Party led by Donald Trump. Violence has been increasing, with cops and neo-Nazis on the offensive and some antiracist, armed resistance. As the November election approaches more violence is expected. There is even talk of civil war.

Today the Big Fascist, imperialist section of the U.S. ruling class has no Lincoln. They have feeble, 77 year old Joe Biden. And the domestically oriented, Small Fascist capitalists have unhinged, egomaniac Donald Trump. The Big Fascists are building fascism under the guise of saving a democracy that never existed. They are trying to build a multiracial patriotism to prepare for war with China and or Russia. They are even trying to pose as antiracists to save their worldwide empire. The Small Fascists want an isolationist Fortress America based on racism.

Unite to fight racism and organize for communism

If violence escalates before or after the November election, masses of workers and students should get into the streets attacking racism. Let's organize our unions, tenant organizations, student groups, and churches to make racists afraid again. If politicians are calling for the vote, or a recount, or such, we organize direct action against racism and sexism. If there is chaos in the streets, we should organize and focus actions against racist targets and call for antiracist demands. Above all we should make clear that this capitalist system has to go. The working class can and should run the world. That's communism. Join the Progressive Labor Party in the fight for worker's power and communist revolution.✪

SUBSCRIBE or RENEW!

All the communist politics, news, and struggle from around the world!

one-year subscription: $20 individual $45 for institution

Name_______________________________

Address_____________________________

City______________ State_______ Zip___________

Make check or money order to:
Challenge Periodicals,
PO Box 808, Brooklyn, NY 11202

